

Rep. Slaughter, Area Religious Leaders Discuss Programs for Katrina Survivors

Interfaith Meeting Highlights Local and National Response to Katrina Relief

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, met today with leading members of Rochester's interfaith community at the Full Gospel Tabernacle Church to discuss the ways in which religious organizations can continue, and further, their aid to those affected by Hurricane Katrina.

"We have with us today a remarkably dedicated group of responders to this tragedy," Rep. Slaughter said. **"In the wake of what has occurred, they have taken strength from their faith, and have used it to assist our brothers and sisters in need,"** she added. **"They've set a bold example of what can be accomplished when we all work together in common purpose to help those whose lives have been devastated. I applaud their work and boundless generosity."**

The groups have combined their resources to generate a large amount of financial aid for Katrina victims, and have already worked to collect school and medical supplies which are being delivered to families in need. Housing has been arranged in Rochester for new residents who were forced to evacuate their homes, and church teams have been dispatched directly to affected areas to aid in the recovery and reconstruction effort.

The event featured speakers and representatives of many of Rochester's faith groups, including: Rev. John Walker of the Faith Community Alliance; Rev. Alan Newton of American Baptist Churches; Judy Azof of the Jewish Community Federation; Dr. Mohamed Shafiq of the Islamic Center; Godon Webster of the Downtown United Presbyterian Church; Carly Touchstone, President of the Greater Rochester Area Evangelicals; Dick Meyers of the Greater Rochester Community of Churches; and Pastor Ira White, the minister of the Full Gospel Tabernacle Church and a representative of the Faith Community Alliance.

A selection of quotes from event participants is included below:

Dick Meyers - Greater Rochester Community of Churches

"One of the most important things happening as a result of this disaster is that there is an inclusive group of leaders coming together for the first time to address the Katrina crisis, and to address poverty, which is an issue too big for any one group to solve on its own. We are creating a broader community, and bringing together religious leaders who have never known each other, even though they have lived in the same city for 25 years."

Reverend John Walker - Faith Community Alliance

"I represent the Faith Community Alliance, a coalition of 85 African-American churches in Rochester and in the surrounding area. We are working in conjunction with churches and agencies to transport food, clothing, school supplies, and other commodities to Baton Rouge. We also have started a process whereby we will provide transportation to any persons from one of the recently devastated areas who wants to come to Rochester to settle here."

Reverend Alan Newton - American Baptist Churches, and President of the Interfaith Forum

"Every faith community, from Muslim to Buddhist to Hindu - all groups are responding in some way, helping anyone in need, irrespective of the faith community to which they belong. The American Baptists are sending advanced teams to the South, and helping people who want to stay there. There are still not enough resources getting to those in need. We found a Southern shelter feeding 300 people, with no support from anywhere. We sent funds to them to help as best we could."

Judy Azof - Assistant Executive Director of the Jewish Community Federation

"The Jewish Community Federation is proud to be a partner in this coalition. Locally, we have raised over \$65,000 dollars in personal donations, money which has helped to feed 25,000 people. Nationally, the Jewish community has raised over \$8.5 million, including \$1 million to provide food for people formerly in the Astrodome. We are very proud to be partners in this interfaith effort, and we will work to help resettle any evacuees who have come to Rochester and who would like to remain here."

Dr. Mohamed Shafiq - Islamic Center

"The Muslim community of greater Rochester is actively working with the interfaith community. We have collected funds, and have housing available for anyone who needs it. We are contributing to national organizations which working to rebuild the Gulf Coast, and we look forward to helping with the ongoing relief effort."

Gordon Webster - Downtown United Presbyterian Church

"We at the Downtown United Presbyterian Church are really delighted to be a part of the growing community of people responding to Katrina. We are a part of a community of churches working to collect school kits and health kits for the needy, and we are also working closely with the Faith Community Alliance to address poverty in Rochester. We see how serious poverty issues have become in New Orleans and throughout the country, and we are working to address them here and around the country."

Carly Touchstone - President of the Greater Rochester Area Evangelicals

“The faith based church services being provided to victims of Katrina are proving once again that the church does the best job of immediate and careful placement of resources into the hands of people who are hurt. Here in Rochester, we want to provide Christian hospitality to everyone in the community, regardless of their faith background. We welcome everyone who is relocating to Rochester as a result of Katrina.”